

Jack Shea
New Jersey FCCLA State President
Pathways to Possibilities

Testimony
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Most freshmen who enter high school experience anxiety about how they will cope in their new home away from home. They ask, "Will I be able to open my locker? How will I find their way around this gigantic school? Will I make new friends? Will I excel in the courses I am taking?" My high school has 2,300 students and two years ago when I started high school, I was not uneasy. I was more confident about this experience than my counterparts. Consequently, I consider myself to be a very lucky student.

Good afternoon, ladies and Gentleman of the New Jersey Board of Education, I am Jack Shea, the 2006-2007 New Jersey FCCLA State President.

As an incoming freshman, I was fortunate to have an older brother who was a very active member of the John P. Stevens High School FCCLA. Before the first day of school, I already had plans to join this organization and be part of the junior Parliamentary Procedure Team. Family, Career and Community Leaders of America was ready to embrace me as a member, open doors to opportunities and launched me into a very focused and exciting high school career.

The best decision I made was to become a member of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America because this organization opened the doors of true leadership development for me and many of my peers. Members are able to experience personal leadership development through numerous national programs and activities. FCCLA activities are diverse and touch upon many important facets of life that include but are not limited to the following:

- Goal setting
- Financial literacy
- Interpersonal communication
- Job seeking skills
- Parliamentary Procedure
- Health and fitness
- Youth anti-violence
- Strengthening family ties
- Occupational skills

This year the New Jersey FCCLA State Officers selected **"Pathways to Possibilities"** as the theme for the 2006-2007 school year. As you can see, this theme explains the value of student involvement in Career and Technical Education.

Due to Family and Consumer Sciences courses and FCCLA, I find that am more focused on my education because the path to success is made clear. The connection between achievement in school and success in the future is unmistakable. FCCLA is a key motivator

with its strong program of work and recognition opportunities. Members learn to set goals for themselves and create a plan of action that demands dedication and courage.

I am among the fortunate high school students who have the opportunity to join a career and technical student organization. At the end of eighth grade, I was not a very mature 14 year old and my grades were suffering. But today, I am proud to tell you that FCCLA placed opportunities in my reach and I was smart enough not to let this good fortune get away. In my freshman year, I joined my chapter's parliamentary procedure team. I traveled to San Diego, California to represent New Jersey in the National Competitive events. I passed the National Parliamentary Procedure test and was made a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians at the age of 15. This year, I competed in Nashville in the Parliamentary Procedure event once again. I am proud to say that this time our team brought home a gold medal. In addition, I was also elected the 2006-2007 New Jersey FCCLA State President.

This Fall, I will begin my junior year in high school. I am contemplating the same challenges as my peers. This time instead of worrying about high school, I am thinking about college admissions and my future. Although, I have not narrowed down a specific career path, I am confident that my Family and Consumer Sciences courses and my FCCLA leadership experiences will have an impact on my future accomplishments. I am learning to master leadership skills such as organization, time management, interpersonal communication, self-discipline and character education. All of these skills will serve me well on any career ladder I select.

The good news is that the "Pathway to Possibilities" is not exclusive. I was not the only "lucky" student in my high school. New Jersey has almost 5,000 FCCLA members that have similar opportunities presented to them through FCCLA and Family and Consumer Sciences education. In one week my brother will enter Wake Forest University and the other seniors who graduated from my chapter will be attending The College of New Jersey, Albright College, Rutgers University, The Fashion Institute of Technology, and Penn State, to name a few. These members "seized the moment" and took advantage of all the opportunities Career and Technical Education had to offer.

I am here today as the FCCLA State President to thank New Jersey State Board of Education members for having the insight to provide a comprehensive education high school education for New Jersey students by including Career Education in the New Jersey Core Standards and the graduation requirements. The state officers and I appreciate your support of Career and Technical Student Organizations and the benefits that membership in FCCLA provides for students. Thanks to this Board of Education and my Career and Technical Education teachers

"I took the road less traveled and it has made all the difference."